

Message Text

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SUBJECT: LABOR STRIKES AND GOP DECREES

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SUMMARY. FORTY-EIGHT-HOUR STRIKE OF APRA-ORIENTED CTP MET WITH LIMITED SUCCESS. TIMELY GOP-DECREED ABROGATION OF 1913 LABOR LAW AND THE FORMATION OF GOVERNMENT/LABOR/MANAGEMENT COMMISSION TO STUDY LABOR PROBLEMS SEEMED TO THROW CTP OFF BALANCE AND HALTED FOR TIME BEING AT LEAST COORDINATION BETWEEN CTP AND OTHER LABOR ORGANIZATIONS. HOWEVER LABOR UNREST BASED ON UNPOPULAR WAGE DECREE CERTAIN TO CONTINUE. END SUMMARY.

1. THE APRISTA-ORIENTED CTP LABOR CONFEDERATION CONCLUDED A 48-HOUR GENERAL STRIKE IN LIMA FEBRUARY 3 AND CARRIED OUT THE SECOND DAY OF ITS WORK STOPPAGE IN THE PROVINCES. CTP LEADERS CLAIM THAT POLICE HAVE ARRESTED SIX TRADE UNIONISTS IN CONNECTION WITH THE STRIKE AND UNION HAS APPROACHED INTERIOR MINISTRY TO DEMAND THEIR RELEASE. ARRESTS WERE APPARENTLY CONNECTED WITH POLICE FEAR OF APRA ATTEMPT TO CURTAIL WORK AT OR EVEN SABOTAGE ELECTRICAL INSTALLATIONS.

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2. PRESS AS WELL AS THE OTHER LABOR ORGANIZATIONS WHICH CTP HAD EXPECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN STRIKE CONTINUED THEIR CONDEMNATION OF IT AS A COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY ACT MASTER-MINDED BY "APRA AND IMPERIALISM". ALTHOUGH CTP SECGEN CRUZADO CLAIMED 150,000 WORKERS STRUCK IN CAPITAL AREA, PRESS AND OTHER UNIONS CALLED STRIKE A TOTAL FLOP. STRIKE DID NOT AFFECT COMMERCE OR SERVICES. SEVERAL PAPERS DID CONCEDE THAT MAJOR SUGAR COOPERATIVES WERE SHUT DOWN AND MOST TEXTILE WORKERS ALONG WITH SOME ELECTRICAL WORKERS WERE OUT ON STRIKE. IN WAKE OF STRIKE, CTP FACED WITH DIFFICULTY IN ITS MOST IMPORTANT BASE (TEXTILE FEDERATION) WHERE DISSIDENTS HAVE CALLED FOR GENERAL ASSEMBLY TO EXPEL APRISTA LEADERSHIP.

3. GOP, NOW FULLY COGNIZANT OF TENSE LABOR SITUATION, QUICKLY FOLLOWED UP ON MORALES BERMUDEZ' JANUARY 30 PROMISES TO THE NEW GOP POLITICAL GROUP (FRONT FOR DEFENSE OF THE REVOLUTION) BY FORMALLY SUSPENDING 1013 DECREE LAW AND ISSUING FEBRUARY 3 SUPREME RESOLUTION IN NAME OF PRIME MINISTER FERNANDEZ MALDONADO AND LABOR MINISTER GALINDO WHICH ESTABLISHES A TRI-PARTITE COMMISSION TO STUDY "LABOR, SOCIAL SECURITY, AND EMPLOYMENT PROBLEMS". COMMISSION WILL BE COMPOSED OF SEVEN GOVERNMENT, FOUR LABOR (CTRP, CGTP, CTP AND CNT), AND THREE EMPLOYER (INDUSTRY, MINING AND COMMERCE) REPRESENTATIVES. PRIME MINISTER FERNANDEZ MALDONADO WILL NAME INDIVIDUAL MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION WHO ARE TO ISSUE THEIR REPORT WITHIN 90 DAYS.

4. COMMENT: BUFFETED BY LABOR PROBLEMS, GOP HOPES THAT QUICK ACTION ON STRIKE LAW AND ESTABLISHMENT OF LABOR COMMISSION WILL PREVENT COALESCENCE OF BROAD-BASED INTER-UNION LABOR AGITATION. MORALES BERMUDEZ' OFFER DID CATCH CTP OFF GUARD. TRI-PARTITE COMMISSION WAS CTP IDEA PRESENTED TO FORMER PRIME MINISTER VARGAS PRIETO. AT THAT TIME THE CGTP OPPOSED EMPLOYER REPRESENTATION. CTP, THEREFORE, HAD NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO APPROVE OF MORALES BERMUDEZ' INITIATIVE. AT THE SAME TIME THE CTP STRIKE HAD ALREADY BEEN SET IN MOTION AND COULD NOT BE CALLED OFF. UNION HOPED STRIKE WOULD DEMONSTRATE ITS MILITANCY AND EMBARRASS COMMUNIST CGTP, BUT INITIAL EFFECT HAS BEEN TO ISOLATE CTP AND MAKE ANY GOVERNMENT DIALOGUE WITH APRA ALL THE MORE DIFFICULT. SOME OBSERVERS SEE FINE HAND OF ANTI-APRA GENERAL FERNANDEZ MALDONADO BEHIND WELL-TIMED PRESIDENTIAL STATEMENT.

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5. IN ANY EVENT, GOP LABOR TROUBLES ARE FAR FROM OVER AND WAGE CEILING REMAINS MAJOR SOURCE OF DISCONTENT. FAR LEFT CCUSC (MINERS, METALWORKERS AND TEACHERS) IS MOBILIZING FOR MID-MARCH GENERAL STRIKE TO COINCIDE WITH BEGINNING OF SCHOOL YEAR AND THE MOSCOW-LINE CGTP IS PLANNING MASSIVE MID-FEBRUARY RALLY. THESE ACTIONS AIM TO FORCE MODIFICATION OF ECONOMIC DECREES. GOP WILL HAVE TO GRAPPLE WITH WAGE QUESTION WITH ALL ITS

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE AUSTERITY PROGRAM IN COMING WEEKS.

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